

# *News from the Wyoming Department of Health*

Tuesday, September 29, 2009

## **Reported Influenza Activity Jumps Sharply Across Wyoming**

Wyoming influenza activity jumped sharply due to swine (novel H1N1) flu and has become widespread across the state over the last week or so, according to the Wyoming Department of Health.

Since late May, 592 cases of influenza have been reported to the department. Of those, 123 cases were reported just in the last week. The department expects the number of actual flu infections around the state to be much higher because most ill persons do not seek medical care or are not tested.

“This current level of activity is near what we have seen some winters during a typical peak of seasonal influenza,” said Dr. Tracy Murphy, state epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health. “What is not typical, however, is the timing or the situation. We don’t usually see so much flu this early in the fall, but because we are dealing with a new strain of influenza this year the increase is not unexpected.”

Murphy said the department’s surveillance activities show Wyoming’s flu activity is almost solely due to the novel H1N1 flu strain. “Over the last month all of the samples confirmed by the Wyoming Public Health lab for influenza have been the new H1N1 strain. If you have the flu in Wyoming right now, you probably have the H1N1 flu.”

Influenza symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches and fatigue. Some patients have also reported diarrhea and vomiting.

“The good news is that we are not seeing a shift in severity of the illnesses. Most people who become ill with novel H1N1 flu are able to recover fully within a few days,” Murphy said.

Since the end of May, the department has received reports of 11 hospitalizations and one death among Wyoming residents in connection with the swine flu virus. “Influenza can be serious in some people and that’s why we should all do our best to avoid spreading illness,” Murphy continued.

“Vaccines are the single most effective weapon we have in fighting influenza,” Murphy said. “This year, people will need a special novel H1N1 flu vaccine in addition to a seasonal vaccine for the best possible protection.” Murphy noted that seasonal vaccines are now available around Wyoming and swine flu vaccine supplies are expected to arrive over the next month or so.

Other measures the department recommends to slow the spread of illness include:

- In general, people who develop influenza-like illness should stay home from work, school or travel until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever. Those who are severely ill (such as having trouble breathing) should seek medical care.
- Avoid contact with ill persons.
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water or the use of an alcohol-based hand gel.
- Covering noses and mouths with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing, and throwing used tissues in a trash can.

Of the total 592 reported flu cases in Wyoming since late May, 225 have been confirmed as swine flu cases. Specific swine (novel H1N1) flu counts provided by the department only reflect cases confirmed by specialized lab testing as the swine flu strain as part of the department's ongoing surveillance activities.

More information about swine flu in Wyoming is available online at [www.health.wyo.gov](http://www.health.wyo.gov) .

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